

President Johnson and the FOIA

Written by Grant Cameron

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President Johnson and the Freedom of Information Act

One positive thing that President Johnson brought to the world of UFOs was the Freedom of Information Act. It was signed into law by Johnson on July 4, 1966.

Johnson, however, signed the bill reluctantly. According to his then Press Secretary Bill Moyers, "He dug in his heels and even threatened to pocket veto the bill after it reached the White House." The bill had not been a presidential initiative but rather a bill that had come out of congress. The chief catalyst behind the Act was US Rep. John Moss (D-CA). Moss was a leading consumer advocate, who had begun his crusade of investigations, reports and hearings on government information policy in 1955."

"This legislation springs from one of our most essential principles: a democracy works best when the people have all the information that the security of the nation permits."

"I have always believed that the freedom of information is so vital that only the national security, not the desire of public officials or private citizens, should determine when it must be restricted."

"I am hopeful that the needs I have mentioned can be served by a constructive approach to the wording and spirit and legislative history of this measure. I am instructing every official in this administration to cooperate to this end and make information available to the full extent consistent with individual privacy and with the national interest. I signed this measure with a deep sense of pride that the United States is an open society in which people's right to know is cherished and guarded."

Not much happened in terms of UFO documents getting released following the creation of the FOIA. The vast majority of UFO documents were released during the Carter administration which profited from the 1974 amendments inspired by the events of Watergate.

Eventually the UFO types became the biggest group using the FOIA. Michael R. Lemov a Washington attorney a former staffer for Moss "I don't think this was something that was contemplated in the legislation, although it certainly wasn't excluded. I must say it wouldn't have

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been one of the priorities."



President Johnson's Press Secretary Bill Moyers was involved with the 1966 FOIA Act. He has taken a strong position against the recent Bush moves towards secrecy. ([See transcript](#))